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**Columbia Redistricting Public Hearing
Summary of Testimony**

Gressette Senate Office Building, Room 308
April 5, 2011 6:30-8:30 p.m. scheduled

The public hearing began at 6:40 p.m. The Redistricting Subcommittee members present were: Senator McConnell, Senator Ford, Senator Hutto, Senator Malloy, Senator Cleary, and Senator Shoopman. Senator L. Martin was absent. The Senate Redistricting staff persons present were: Charlie Terreni, Debbie Hammond, Katherine Wells, and Sharon Scholl.

Senator McConnell introduced members of the subcommittee and explained the redistricting process. He also explained that the ground rules for all of the 10 public hearings would be to ask each speaker to be clear, brief, and civil, so all persons would have the time to present their ideas and concerns clearly and concisely and that all positions would be given respect. He also asked speakers to let the subcommittee know if their remarks referred to Senate or Congressional redistricting concerns or to both.

1. Michael Rodgers spoke first. He wants the subcommittee to realize that no Senators are from Allendale, Bamberg, Barnwell, Calhoun, Chester, Chesterfield, Colleton, Dillon, Hampton, Lancaster, Lee, Marlboro, McCormick, Saluda or Union counties. He believes this violates the SC Constitutional provision that requires a senator to be elected from each county and, therefore, the Senate districts should not cross county lines. He also wants the subcommittee to adhere to federal law and satisfy the requirement that SC comply with the Voting Rights Act and the related U.S. Supreme Court decisions. However, he believes that the subcommittee must first focus on the SC Constitution and that the federal requirements are additional requirements that do not absolve the subcommittee from ignoring the SC Constitutional provision.

2. Victoria Middleton, executive director of the ACLU, thanked the members for the public hearings and read a statement into the record which she also gave to staff for inclusion in the written documents. In the statement, she reminds the subcommittee of the need for fair and impartial redistricting and to remember to make each voter feel welcome to participate in the process. She asks that the subcommittee be aware of the one person, one vote principle and that the 14th Amendment has been interpreted to require all legislative seats to be apportioned according to the one person, one vote principle. She wants the subcommittee to utilize traditional redistricting principles, such as compactness, contiguity, preservation of county lines, communities of interest, and competitiveness so that each voter's right to have a voice in how he or she is governed is heard. She does not want the minority voting strength diluted and she wants the subcommittee to consider the obstacles that communities of color face to meaningful participation in the redistricting process. She also wants compliance with the federal Voting Rights Act.

3. Bonan Li spoke to the subcommittee about new technology that makes redistricting easier. She told the subcommittee about new technology developed by a USC professor where a person draws communities of interest on a map and the computer then performs the redistricting and is very fast.

4. Lonnie Randolph, Jr., president of the SC NAACP, spoke to the subcommittee about keeping the redistricting process fair to all citizens of SC. He wants the subcommittee to not allow "packing" in their

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redistricting plans, because that has caused a very unusual and strange division of the people in SC. As a result, he feels that some districts have become blacker and others whiter. He hopes there is a way to fix this. He also thinks this can be fixed without any retrogression. With regard to congressional districts, he wants the division of the districts to be fair to all. He also wants the influence of persons in rural areas to be considered as they should be in the 7th Congressional District.

Senator Ford asked Mr. Randolph to give him an example of packing. Mr. Randolph said there are several districts that have a majority African-American population and others with white population that are over 60%, and he does not think that is the necessary percentage to win an election. He also thinks that the way districts have been drawn have resulted in removing the influence that certain groups used to have.

Senator Ford then asked, if 60% is too much, what percentage did the NAACP think was acceptable? Dr. Randolph would not give a certain number, but if the subcommittee used an unfair number, then he would let the subcommittee know it was not fair.

5. Kamau Marcharia spoke next. He is a county councilman from Fairfield County. He attended the meeting to learn about the redistricting process and says that he concurs with what Dr. Randolph said.

Senator McConnell then asked if anyone else wanted to speak. He also introduced Senator Scott and Senator Cromer, both of whom attended the hearing.

6. Lu Nolan asked to speak. She wants to know what the next step will be in the redistricting process, when will criteria be determined and made public and how long will the process take. Senator McConnell explained that after the 10 public hearings are concluded, the subcommittee then meets to determine and adopt which criteria to use for drawing the maps. After the criteria are selected, then there is the opportunity for public input on the criteria, and then the staff is asked to start drawing plans. Sen. McConnell also explained that the criteria would be adopted at a public meeting, and that the criteria would then go on the website. He also said that there would be an opportunity for public input while plans are being drawn and made public. He explained that he could not speak for the House of Representatives, so he could not state when the process would be final, but he hoped that the Senate could wrap up its part by the first of June.

7. Tishia Addison asked to speak next. She wanted to know what happens when lines are drawn that cross so that an incumbent in Orangeburg and an incumbent in Barnwell end up in close proximity, because someone had told her that this sometimes happens in redistricting. Senator McConnell explained that people would not be in two districts and that the Senate uses computers to ensure that the district lines are contiguous and there are no “doughnut holes” within a district. He also explained that the subcommittee will not have control over where a VTD or precinct line exists, and that the subcommittee has to comply with certain criteria and that may prohibit the plan from adding people if it violates the criteria. Ms. Addison then wanted to know if someone could lose their office in redistricting, if two incumbents end up in the same district. Sen. McConnell said that it depends on criteria selected, if it includes pitting incumbents against incumbents, or instead includes a provision protecting the core sections of existing districts. He said that the subcommittee would be following traditional redistricting principles. Ms. Addison then asked if incumbents have priority within redistricting. Sen. McConnell explained that the criteria would have priority when plans are drawn. Amendments to redistricting plans

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can be introduced on the floor of the Senate, but Sen. McConnell stated that amendments that do not meet the criteria have failed to be included because they did not comply with the criteria and the criteria is the objective guideposts that the Senate uses in drawing redistricting plans. She then wanted to know about what opportunities the voters will have to get new officials if the districts continue to be drawn the way they always have been. Sen. McConnell explained that no maps had been drawn by this subcommittee, which he also pointed out to her was a very diverse group of individuals.

8. Carol Cato spoke about the need to not split precincts in determining the lines for Congressional Districts. She says it allows for mistakes during elections because some people living on one side of the street vote in one Congressional District, like the 2nd, while people on the other side of the street vote for the 6th Congressional District, but they all vote at the same precinct. So she is asking for VTDS not to be split. She also thanked Sen. McConnell for having such a diverse and quality subcommittee.

Since no one else wished to speak, Senator McConnell adjourned the meeting at approximately 7:10 pm.